

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 3

By Johnson

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize Les Leverett for his illustrious career in the field of photography.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should salute those photographers who have dedicated themselves to chronicling the traditions of country music; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Les Leverett, a renowned photographer whose work in the country music industry is considered iconic; and

WHEREAS, a Montgomery, Alabama native, Mr. Leverett is one of William Walter and Hassie May Raburn Leverett's three children; and

WHEREAS, a proud veteran of the United States Army, Les Leverett served in the Army Medical Department aboard a troop ship during World War II. After completing his military service, he studied photography in San Antonio, Texas; and

WHEREAS, while living in San Antonio, Mr. Leverett met Nashville native Dorothy Vandiver; the two married in 1949 and moved to Nashville the following year; and

WHEREAS, from 1952 to 1956, Les Leverett worked for Associated Photographers in Nashville, before joining the National Life and Accident Insurance Company in 1960 to establish the company's photography department; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his work with the insurance company, he served as a photographer for WSM television, WSM radio, and the Grand Ole Opry, where he worked with renowned musicians, including Roy Acuff, Eddy Arnold, Chet Atkins, Gene Autry, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, George Jones, Loretta Lynn, Connie Smith, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Tony Bennett, and Ray Charles, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Leverett dedicated thirty-two years to his career as staff photographer for the Grand Ole Opry and WSM radio before retiring in 1992; and

WHEREAS, seventeen years later, in 2009, Les Leverett came out of retirement to serve as the official photographer for the weekly television program, *The Marty Stuart Show*; and

WHEREAS, Marty Stuart had the highest praise for Mr. Leverett, saying, "Les Leverett is the Dean of Country Music photographers. He is to country music what Abraham Lincoln's photographer, Matthew Brady, was to the visual history of the Civil War. Les's photography will forever be regarded as iconic documents of country music and its people at their finest." Porter Wagoner applauded his ability to capture the Grand Ole Opry's "excitement and warmth on film"; and

WHEREAS, exhibitions of his work have been featured at the International Bluegrass Music Museum in Owensboro, Kentucky; the Cheekwood Fine Arts Center in Nashville; the Nashville International Airport's Arts at the Airport program; and, most recently, the Annenberg Space for Photography in Los Angeles, California; and

WHEREAS, Les Leverett published several books about his prestigious career, including *Long Journey Home*, *Bluegrass Chronicles of Les Leverett*, and *American Music Legends*; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Mr. Leverett received a Grammy award for the album cover of Porter Wagoner's *Confessions of a Broken Man* in 1967, *Billboard's* Best Country Cover award for his work on Dolly Parton's *Bubbling Over* album in 1973, the International Bluegrass Music Association's Distinguished Achievement Award in 2001, and the first Distinguished Achievement Award conferred by the California Bluegrass Association in 2006; and

WHEREAS, devoted to his family, Mr. Leverett enjoyed the love and support of his wife, the late Dorothy Leverett, and he is the proud father of Gary Leverett, Libby Leverett Crew, and the late John Leverett; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Les Leverett has served the country music industry as a chronicler of its great institutions and artists; and

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly wish to thank Les Leverett for his contributions to Music City and this State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and recognize Les Leverett for his illustrious career as a photographer and his many contributions to country music, and extend to him our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.